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LETTERS FROM HON. HENRY LAURENS TO HIS
SON JOHN, 1773-1776.

[*Continued from the January number.*]

[11.]

Addressed : A Monsieur
Mons^r Jean Laurens
par paris a
Genevè
Postmarked : Dangleterre

Westminster 19th April 1774

My Dear Son—

My last to you was the 8th Inst—Yesterday I received your favours of the 4th & 7th Covering Letters for M^r Clarke & Doctor Garden, the first is gone to Hackney, & the other will go on board Capt Maitland to Morrow—had you been a little nearer I should have returned it with a strong recommendation to Copy it over again— You should not expose yourself to the remarks & censures of your friends by such scribbled blotted performnaces, 'tis disrespectful to them & disreputable to yourself, if you will persevere in the same way, you will never find honour or profit result from the habit, but it may in some respects be a Bar against both — — — I know there is an affectation in many of the would be—family—to avoid writing the Legible hand of a Merchants Clerk, or to imitate the accuracy of a hackney Amanuensis—believe me Jack tis all affectation—or the effect of Idleness, or Idle hurry— You can write a fine hand, write quick & with accuracy—to keep yourself in the practice may possibly be attended with particular advantage to you—will always

command praise & never will be disgraceful to a first rate Scholar or an Independent fortune.——

I had entertained a high opinion of Mr Locke & was therefore anxious to know if you were so fortunate as to be continued in the list of his acquaintance— You will present me in respectful terms to that Gentleman, to Mr Neville & to the General—if you can think of any thing which I could send, that would enable you to give some token of your gratitude for their Civilities, I should gladly do it.— something of this sort may be necessary before you leave Genève; think of the subject & inform me.

My Compliments to Mess^{rs} Smith¹¹ & Petrie, I have not anything new to say concerning their Education—Mr Petrie's Letter for his Brother will go with yours to Morrow—Master Manning will receive a Letter from his Papa by this Mail which he is to lay before you—

[am sorry you cant enter Harry with the best drawing Master— My Love to him & tell him if he is fond of playing at Fists, he will find companions in abundance in this Country whose hands are somewhat harder than those of the Genevoés.—

You will receive a Letter inclosed from your Brother James—he writes well & is going fast on in his Grammar, but I would give a great deal to have him put upon your new plan of Education.—there are so many Blockheaded Grammarians. that one is apt to treat the term with Contempt.—

Your Ministerial party will have more ground for triumph—how long they may continue to exult is uncertain—I have not time just now to say much let it satisfy you for the present to be informed that the New Bill for regulating the

¹¹ William Loughton Smith, son of Hon. Benjamin Smith (1718-1770) and Ann Loughton; was *b.* about 1758 and *d.* in Dec. 1812. After leaving Geneva he studied law in the Middle Temple and was admitted to the bar in Charleston in 1784. He was elected to the 1st. Congress (1789-1791) from the Charleston district and was reelected to the 2d, 3d, 4th and 5th, but resigned in 1797 to accept the post of Charge d'affaires in Portugal; was transferred to the Spanish mission in 1800 and was relieved in 1801. He was the author of several political works.

Government of Massachusetts is said to be the effect of necessity, in order to correct the Tumults in Boston & preventive of the like in future those tumults were produced by the attempts to Raise a Revenue by Internal Duties in America— & they are now going to Repeal those Duties—the bare Repeal would produce peace & Quietness—but the Regulating Bill, unjust & severe as it will be unnecessary accompanied by the Repeal, will keep up the flame, perhaps increase it— Leave is given to bring in the Bill, it is to be printed, when I know more of the business I shall be better able to speak of it—our friends in Charles Town were well to the 10th March— & the Indians inclined to peace— Adieu My Dear Son

Henry Laurens.

The Carolina Instruction
of the 14 April 1770 is withdrawn—
Your draught for Eighty Louis
shall be paid but I request you
to sever Master petrie's Account
& inform me the exact amount
& particulars & never blend it with any other—

Mr John Laurens.

Endorsed : 9th April. 1774. Westminster

[12.]

Addressed : A Monsieur
Monsieur Jean Laurens
par paris a
Genevé

Postmarked : Dangleterre

Westminster 3^d May 1774.

My Dear Son—

Soon after I wrote you at Calais on Saturday last I embarked in one of the Packets, had an excellent pas-

sage to Dover & relodged myself in Fludver Street Sunday Evening—where I had the pleasure of meeting your Letter of the 19th Ult^o—while I was at Calais Major Norton who in his way to Marseilles was to pass through Lion took charge of a small packet containing an English News paper, & directed to you which he promised to put into the post Office at Lion—the perusal of Coll^o Barre’s Speech in the House of Commons against the Bill for “the impartial administration of Justice in the province of Massachusetts” &c inserted in that paper I thought would afford you pleasure & information.

The Bill for Eighty Louis which you drew on me I ordered to be paid yesterday, without regard to the running days—& I shall settle the article on M^r Petrie’s Account with M^r Hawkins hereafter but let his Accounts be kept & drawn for distinctly from every other & the draughts may be on M^r John Hawkins Cheapside whom I shall instruct to pay them.—that Young Gentleman writes that he was just upon Entering at the Fencing School when my Letter to you prevented it—this shews inclination—I give my consent therefore that he may be immediately Entered, the expence will not be great & I think the Art & Exercise will be attended with present advantages to say the least—if I don’t write to him by this conveyance, assure him of my Love & attention to his Interest.—

You judged right, that the change in Harry, would afford me pleasure—Encourage him by all the means in your power to surmount his fears on Horseback & of the Water, I would give a good deal of Money to hear that he had learned to Swim.—keep him constantly in the course of his Duty, & from following any examples of Idleness & neglect of Study. M^r Manning is no less pleased to hear you speak favorably of his Boy—but those two, are of very different complexions—& have undergone very different discipline from their Infancy—let us make the most we can of them respectively, but it behoves you to be watchful over them—advice

& friendly admonition is all that you can administer to one—but to the other you must, if needful, extend authoritative commands & exact a compliance.—I have forwarded your Letters to Doctor Garden & Mr Clarke as intimated in mine of the 19th April—from the latter I have lately received a few Lines & this P. S. —“I shall answer your Sons obliging Letter the first time that I can draw my mind to sufficient recollection”—our poor friend writes of being under a dark furnace & smoke of inward Cross—as being Cast down but not slain going through this Wilderness &c—whence I conceive his mind is agitated beyond its rational power.—

I am now beginning to plan for my return to Carolina, first to go into the Country here, take leave of our friends in different parts—adjust Accounts with some of them & Collect articles for Town & Country uses on the other side of the Water—such business will probably find employment for me to the 26th June—then if nothing extraordinary intervenes to prevent me, I shall be ready to wait upon my Sons either at Genevé or somewhere on the Road, in order to conduct them to this Kingdom—our way shall be through Switzerland & Holland, or Lion & Paris, as you shall think best & I desire your full & candid opinion—having on my part only to observe, that if we go to Paris, a deviation to Poitiers may happen, where we may see the family which claims relationship with us—& that the former Rout will be most agreeable to the Season & shew you a new Country— If I can return here by the 1st or even the 10th August—there will be time enough for me to settle you, to determine upon a proper disposition of your Brothers¹² & to prepare for the embarkation of myself & either or both of them. You see, the time is approaching fast when you will be tried & your improvements scrutinized, by real friends & by Envy Masked in Friendship's Veil; receive the impression which is intended by this suggestion & you will gain four Months in May and June.

I must also request your opinion, on Harry's future process

¹² Henry (“Harry”) and James.

will he receive advantages from a continued residence at Genevé—or will it be proper to keep him under your Eye or mine—in England or Carolina?—I shall have much to say to you of our dear little fellow at Winson Green—I have not heard from him for several Weeks, but he's a fellow of whom we can make any thing that's good.—

I was going to say other things of our own & of public Concern but M^r Motte¹³ came in & chatted away time till I have not ten Minutes to spare—

The Carolina people had Entered into strong Resolutions against Importing buying or selling Tea & to keep the East India Company's Adventure in safe Custody until it should be Reexported.¹⁴

The Georgia House of Assembly are in strong opposition to Sir James Wright notwithstanding certain allurements for securing as he hoped a large Majority—they have made his pillow is Rough—

Sir Geo Saville did us Americans the honour of presenting our petition yesterday against the Boston Charter Bill, it was well received—M^r Dunning opened the debate on our side, which continued till 3 oClock this Morning upon a division we had 64. against the Bill* which in present circumstances we count a glorious shew—to Morrow we shall present another petition to the Lords — — afterward if needful, to the King,

¹³ Isaac Motte, of South Carolina.

¹⁴ On Wednesday evening, December 2, 1773, the *London*, Capt. Alexander Curling, arrived in Charles Town from London having on board two hundred and fifty-seven chests of East India Company tea. A mass meeting of the citizens of the Province was held in the Exchange on Friday afternoon, the 4th., and the consignees of the tea, Roger Smith and Leger & Greenwood, were asked to decline receiving it. This they did amid great applause. This obliged Capt. Curling to keep the tea on board until the 22d. when, no consignee being willing to take it, the customs officers seized it under the regulations requiring cargoes to be unloaded in twenty days after reaching port. This and subsequent shipments were stored in the basement of the Exchange, where it remained until October, 1776, when it was sold for the benefit of the public service. (See Wallace's *A Chapter of South Carolina Constitutional History*.)

these struggles tho unsuccessful at present will be of great service eventually—but I hear the Bellman—

Give my Love to Harry & each of the Young Gentlemen

I remain

* 233 for

64 against

My Dear Son

Your faithful friend,

Your affectionate Father

Henry Laurens,

Have Lord Chesterfield's

Letters to his Son

Phil Dorm Stanhope, reach Geneve

& have you seen them?———

2 thick Volumes quarto—

Endorsed: 3^d May 1774

Westminster.

[13.]

Addressed: A Monsieur

Mons^r Jean Laurens.

par paris

a

Genevé

Postmarked: Dangleterre

Westminster 10 May 1774,

My Dear Son—

My last Letter was of this day se'nnight which brings you again largely in Arrears—

You are anxious to know how American affairs go on, I shall inform you as fully as my time & knowledge will admit of, first by referring you to an extract of a Letter which I wrote to your Uncle the 7th Inst & which shall go under this cover, you will learn my opinion of the state of our dispute antecedent to the Enacting the late Law for incapacitating Boston to be a trading port & the Laws which are now

impending, for altering the form of Government & for the impartial Administration of Justice &c—

The original point in dispute was the Right of Taxation in America by the British Parliament—a Right lately assumed & which Parliament could not maintain with that clearness & dignity which is necessary to command respect & obedience—the Members of both Houses differed among themselves the Wisest Men in each & all America denied the Right, & this Nation at large asserted the impolicy & inexpediency by petitions from all quarters this vast opposition occasioned the Repeal of the Stamp Act—other attempts were nevertheless made under different modes which excited fresh struggles & partial redress was obtained by new Repealing Acts, but a Bone of contention was unhappily reserved by the Duty upon Tea, which served but to irritate the Americans & to raise their Contempt, & in their resentment against the measure for establishing the Claim of Right under the mutilated Revenue Laws they have gone too far, have talked in a Language which is not warranted by that Constitution to which they appeal & have committed Acts of violence which none but an Impotent State would suffer the Enemies of American freedom have therefore shifted their Ground & you will easily perceive the advantage which they had gained—but I think they are loosing it again by grasping at too much & the face of affairs may be suddenly changed by a few wise Resolutions on the other side—unhappy Contest, Victory to either party will be little better than a defeat to the Conqueror—if a good opportunity offers I may send you Copies of the Acts of Parliament & some Tracts on the subjects in dispute—but I shall not say any more on them till we meet unless something very provoking shall happen—

You will be preparing for a retreat from Geneva & endeavour to make it with Credit & Honour, some extra expences you must unavoidably incur which I shall chearfully provide for—I need not say a word more to induce you to make the best improvement of your remaining time—

I made a remark some time ago on your having discharged your Italian Tutor to which you gave no Answer, I hope you have gained an extensive if not a perfect knowledge of that Language— I hope you will find time while you remain in Europe to learn so much of the German & Spanish as to read their Authors & then I think you will have enough of Language—I cant doubt of your having devoted some of your time to gain a knowledge of the Constitution, if it has one, & Laws of the Republic in which you live & that you have enquired into the nature of the Swiss Governments in the several Cantons & made such minutes as will enable you to give answers to questions which will often be put to you upon those subjects, how are the poor Savoyards in your vicinity governed & of what benefit are they to the State ?

A Bundle of Letters just sent to me by Capt Gunn in which I find one of your Sister Patty's direction for you—it will go under this Cover—my latest date is the 18 March, not a word more of Indian War, the province was in great distress from the want of a Tax Bill & other Laws which they are still deprived of by the old dispute—they Complain also of a vast scarcity of Money Lord William Campbell's arrival among them will remove some of their difficulties— Our Cousin Katy Ball that was—lately died, other friends all well—Give my Love to Harry, I pray God to bless you both—

Henry Laurens,

Your Sister has wrote to me
for a pair of Globes—you see what
learned folks we are all to be—
I hope she can make a good Plumb Pudding—
& in that hope I'll send her both Worlds—

Endorsed: 10th May 1774
Westminster——

[To be continued in the next number of this Magazine.]